

## STATEMENT OF OPINION

by **Doctor of Sciences Neli Hristova Grozeva Professor at Trakia University - Stara Zagora**

on the materials submitted for the competition for the academic position of "**Associate Professor**" at Plovdiv University "**Paisii Hilendarski**"

in the field of higher education: 4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Informatics, professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences (Ecology and Ecosystem Conservation)

In the competition for "Associate Professor," announced in the State Gazette No. 32 from 09.04.2024 and on the website of Plovdiv University (PU) "Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Department of "Ecology and Environmental Protection" within the Faculty of Biology, the candidates are Chief Assistant Dr. Slaveya Tencheva Petrova and Chief Assistant Dr. Vesela Slavcheva Yancheva from the Department of "Ecology and Environmental Protection" at the Faculty of Biology at Plovdiv University.

### 1. General Overview of the Procedure and Candidates

By order No. P33-21-1416 dated 08.07.2024, issued by the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU), I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury for the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in PU in the field of higher education 4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Informatics, professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences (Ecology and Ecosystem Conservation), announced for the needs of the Department of "Ecology and Environmental Protection" within the Faculty of Biology.

The submitted sets of materials on electronic media by the two candidates, Chief Assistant Dr. Slaveya Tencheva Petrova and Chief Assistant Dr. Vesela Slavcheva Yancheva, comply with the regulations for the development of the academic staff of PU.

**Chief Assistant Dr. Slaveya Tencheva Petrova** has submitted the following documents: a standard application form to the rector for participation in the competition; a CV; a diploma for a master's degree; a diploma for a Ph.D.; a list of scientific works; scientific publications (copies of the publications); a list of citations; a report on compliance with the minimum national and additional faculty requirements; summaries of the materials under Art. 65 of the regulations for the development of the academic staff at PU (in Bulgarian and a foreign language) with an extended habilitation report; summaries of the materials in Bulgarian and English; an extended habilitation report; self-assessment of contributions in Bulgarian and English; a declaration of originality and authenticity of the submitted documents; 2 certificates of work experience at PU "Paisii Hilendarski" and at the Agricultural University; documents for teaching work - a total of 6 items; documents for research work - a total of 7 items; documents according to the additional requirements of the Faculty of Biology - a total of 9 items; other documents – 2 diplomas, 1 anniversary certificate, 10 certificates, 1 membership certificate from the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria.

Dr. Slaveya Petrova has submitted a total of 40 scientific works, including 5 under criterion B, 2 monographs, 1 book, 3 book chapters, and 13 textbooks and teaching aids. 34 scientific publications that do not overlap with the materials used for the Ph.D. and for the position of Chief Assistant are accepted for review and considered in the final evaluation; 13 teaching aids and a total of 32 research projects, of which 6 are international, 12 are national, and

14 are intra-university. Six scientific works related to the dissertation and included in the competition for the position of Chief Assistant are not reviewed. All scientific publications are indexed and referenced in the Web of Science and Scopus databases.

**Chief Assistant Dr. Vesela Slavcheva Yancheva** has submitted the following documents: a standard application form to the rector for participation in the competition; a CV; a master's degree diploma; a Ph.D. diploma; a list of scientific works; scientific works; a list of citations; a report on compliance with the minimum national and additional faculty requirements; summaries of the materials under Art. 65 of the regulations for the development of the academic staff at PU; self-assessment of contributions; a declaration of originality and authenticity of the submitted documents; a certificate of work experience; documents for teaching work; documents for research work; documents according to the additional requirements of the Faculty of Biology; attended training courses and recommendations.

Dr. Vesela Yancheva has submitted a list of a total of 74 scientific works, 4 textbooks and teaching aids. A total of 43 scientific works, which do not overlap with the materials used for the Ph.D. and for the position of Chief Assistant, are accepted for review; 4 teaching aids and 15 research projects, of which 1 is international, 3 are national, and 11 are intra-university. Three scientific works related to the dissertation and 23 scientific works that are not indexed or referenced in the Web of Science and Scopus databases are not reviewed. The candidate's document set lacked a report on the scientific works used to obtain the position of Chief Assistant. This report was subsequently provided by the University, and it was found that two of the scientific publications presented for this competition overlap with those listed under criterion B.

#### ***Brief Biographical Data of the Candidates***

**Chief Assistant Dr. Slaveya Petrova** obtained a bachelor's degree in 2006 in Ecology and Environmental Protection, and in 2008 a master's degree in Ecology and Ecosystem Conservation at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski." Between 2009 and 2012, she was a Ph.D. student at PU "Paisii Hilendarski," working on a dissertation titled "Passive and Active Phytomonitoring of Atmospheric Pollution in Plovdiv," and obtained a Ph.D. degree. Since 2011, she has been working as a Chief Assistant at the Faculty of Biology at PU "Paisii Hilendarski." Since 2017, Dr. Petrova has also been employed as a Chief Assistant under a second employment contract, and from 2024, she has held the academic position of Associate Professor in the Department of Microbiology and Environmental Biotechnology at the Faculty of Plant Protection and Agroecology at the Agricultural University. I am familiar with the scientific research, and teaching activities of Slaveya Petrova as a member of the scientific jury in the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the scientific specialty of Ecology and Ecosystem Conservation at the Agricultural University.

**Chief Assistant Dr. Vesela Yancheva** obtained a bachelor's degree in 2008 in Plant Protection from the Agricultural University, and in 2010 a master's degree in Ecology from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. Between 2011 and 2014, she was a Ph.D. student at PU "Paisii Hilendarski," working on a dissertation titled "The Impact of Heavy Metals on Fish Species in the Topolnitsa Reservoir, Bulgaria," and obtained a Ph.D. degree. Since 2014, Dr. Vesela Yancheva has been working as a Chief Assistant at the Faculty of Biology at PU "Paisii Hilendarski," and since 2020, she has also been an Erasmus+ Coordinator at the Faculty of Biology at the University.

## 2. General Characterization of the Candidates' Activities

### *Teaching and Educational Activities*

**Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Slaveya Petrova** has 11 years of teaching experience at Plovdiv University. Over the past 5 years, Dr. Petrova has lectured and conducted practical sessions for students in 10 specialties, 8 of which are in the Faculty of Biology, 1 in the Faculty of Philosophy and History, and 1 in the Faculty of Physics and Technology. She presents a list of 37 academic courses that have been developed or updated independently or in collaboration. Dr. Petrova's annual teaching load over the last five academic years ranges from 839 to 1342 teaching hours, without doubling the hours for lectures delivered. The development of curricula and lecture courses for 10 different specialties convincingly demonstrates her extensive teaching experience. Dr. Petrova has co-authored 4 textbooks and 9 teaching aids, one of which has been published in English for foreign students, further contributing significantly to her teaching work. Under her supervision, 22 students have earned bachelor's degrees, and 14 have earned master's degrees. She has served on committees for organizing student competitions and entrance exams and is a member of quality assurance and accreditation committees for the 4.3 professional field of Biological Sciences.

**Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Vesela Yancheva** has nearly 10 years of teaching experience at Plovdiv University, with a strong background in educational activities. Over the past 5 years, she has lectured and conducted practical sessions in 6 compulsory disciplines for students in 2 specialties in the Faculty of Biology, and 1 specialty in the Faculty of Philosophy and History, as well as elective courses for master's students in 6 different specialties. She has also developed a new elective discipline. Her annual teaching load over the last five academic years ranges from 540 to 712 hours. Dr. Yancheva has co-authored 2 textbooks and 2 teaching aids. Under her supervision, 4 students have earned bachelor's degrees, and 1 has earned a master's degree. She has participated in organizing committees for student competitions and is a member of accreditation committees for the 4.3 professional field of Biological Sciences, selection of students, foreign language proficiency certification, ethical treatment of lab animals, international activities, and public relations.

### *Scientific and Research Activities*

**Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Slaveya Petrova** participates in this competition with 40 scientific works beyond her PhD thesis and previous appointment as chief assistant professor. The publications in refereed and indexed journals (Web of Science and Scopus), equivalent to habilitation work, include 5 papers (4 in Q1 journals, 1 in Q2), which provide her with a total of 120 points for group B indicators, exceeding the minimum requirement of 100 points. For group C indicators, Dr. Petrova presents 2 monographs (not used as main habilitation work), 1 book based on her dissertation, 3 book chapters, and 29 publications in indexed journals (Web of Science and Scopus), including 1 in Q1, 6 in Q2, 8 in Q3, and 14 in Q4. All publications are co-authored, with Dr. Petrova as the lead author in 11 of them, demonstrating her team-working skills, which are highly valued in the scientific community. These works provide her with 513 points, significantly exceeding the required 200 points for group D indicators. The monographs and scientific papers result from research in three key areas: Urban Ecosystem Ecology, Natural Ecosystem Ecology, and Organic Agriculture. The provided contributions are sufficient to meet the requirements for the academic position of "Associate Professor." Dr. Petrova also presents

265 citations in indexed publications (Web of Science and Scopus), indicating the scientific community's interest in her research, which provides her with 530 points for group D indicators, well above the required 50 points. According to Scopus, Dr. Petrova has 40 publications, 235 citations, and an h-index of 8, demonstrating her international recognition and scientific contributions. She has participated in 6 international, 12 national, and 14 internal university projects relevant to the competition's theme. Dr. Petrova meets and significantly exceeds the minimum national requirements and additional criteria set by the Faculty of Biology at Plovdiv University for the position of "Associate Professor" in Ecology and Environmental Protection within the 4.3 professional field of Biological Sciences.

**Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Vesela Yancheva** enters the competition with 43 scientific works beyond her PhD thesis and previous appointment as chief assistant professor. For group B indicators, Dr. Yancheva presents 7 publications in indexed journals (Web of Science and Scopus), equivalent to habilitation work, including 3 in Q2 journals, 3 in Q3, and 1 in Q4. However, two publications presented in the competition were used in her previous application for chief assistant professor, so these are excluded from the assessment. The remaining 5 publications provide her with a total of 90 points, falling short of the required 100 points for group B indicators. For group C indicators, Dr. Yancheva presents 38 publications in indexed journals, including 4 in Q1, 4 in Q2, 5 in Q3, and 25 in Q4. All publications are co-authored, with Dr. Yancheva as the lead author in 16, further proving her strong teamwork abilities. These works provide her with 542 points, far exceeding the required 200 points for group D indicators. Dr. Yancheva presents 323 citations in indexed publications, showing the scientific community's interest in her research, which earns her 646 points for group D indicators, well above the required 50 points. According to Scopus, she has 59 publications, 457 citations, and an h-index of 13, demonstrating her international recognition and contributions. She has participated in 1 international, 3 national, and 11 internal university projects and has presented her work at numerous scientific forums both domestically and internationally. Despite exceeding the national requirements in several areas, Dr. Yancheva does not meet the minimum national requirements for group B indicators.

### **3. Critical Comments and Recommendations**

I have no serious critical remarks regarding the documents submitted by Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Slaveya Petrova.

For Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Vesela Yancheva, the absence of a list of publications used in her previous application for chief assistant professor was noted, necessitating the request for additional information.

### **CONCLUSION**

The materials submitted by Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Slaveya Tencheva Petrova fully meet the national minimum requirements for the position of "Associate Professor" according to the regulations for the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. She also meets the additional requirements set by the Faculty of Biology at Plovdiv University for the academic position of "Associate Professor." Her scientific contributions are recognized internationally, and her teaching and research activities demonstrate her qualifications, justifying a positive evaluation.

The materials submitted by Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Vesela Slavcheva Yancheva do not meet the minimum national requirements for group B indicators for the position of "Associate Professor" as per the regulations for the development of academic staff in Bulgaria.

I recommend the scientific jury to vote in favor, and for the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Biology at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" to elect Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Slaveya Tencheva Petrova for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in Ecology and Environmental Protection, professional field 4.3 Biological Sciences, higher education area 4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Informatics.

September 5, 2024

Prepared by: .....  
Prof. D.Sc. Neli Grozeva